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THE

# TRANSVAAL CRISIS.

BY

SIR HENRY MEYSEY-THOMPSON,

BART., M.P.

*REMARKS ON THE*

*PRESENT CONDITION OF AFFAIRS.*

TOGETHER WITH A REPRINT OF AN ARTICLE BY HIM IN THE "NINETEENTH CENTURY" REVIEW ON THE

"REAL GRIEVANCES OF THE UITLANDERS."

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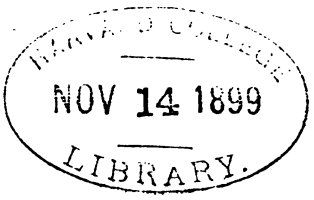


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# INTRODUCTION

I AM offering this reprint of the real grievances of the Uitlanders to the public because, though the grievances remain substantially the same as they were eighteen months ago, the public interest in them has enormously increased, and I find that very many people who did not care to read an article on them in February 1898 are now extremely anxious to study the question and find out 'what it is all about.'

For those who have not carefully considered the subject it may be useful to bear the following facts in mind.

The portion of South Africa comprised in the British sphere of influence—that is to say, the territory in which England would not tolerate the interference of any foreign Power, and would fight to the death before any such interference could take place—is divided into five great provinces:

1. Natal.
2. The Transvaal.
3. The Orange Free State.
4. The Cape Colony.
5. Rhodesia.

These five divisions comprise within their boundaries 1,159,237 square miles, or an area equal to the total extent of France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Austria, and Hungary, and this vast territory has at present an extremely scanty population. The latest census returns are for 1891 and 1892, but reliable information shows that the whole population, black and white, men, women, and children, of these five

provinces does not, including towns, seaports, and all the population of the diamond fields and gold mines, exceed 4,100,000 persons. Scotland, with its great expanse of moors and mountains, is not a densely-populated country; but, while the British sphere of influence in South Africa is 38½ times the size of Scotland, the total population is less than that of Scotland (about 4,186,849).

To put it in another way, if London were emptied of its inhabitants, and all the inhabitants, black and white, of these five great provinces were brought in to fill their places, they would not suffice to do so: there would still be houses empty and room for more people.

The number of the white inhabitants, men, women, and children, of Cape Colony—viz. 376,987—is much less than the present population of Leeds (416,618).

The white population of the Orange Free State—between 80,000 and 90,000—is less than the population of Halifax (95,747).

The white population of the Transvaal, as given in the 'Staats Almanak' of 1899, is 288,750, very much less than the population of Sheffield (324,243).

At a very liberal estimate the total number of Dutch inhabitants (including Boers) of the whole of South Africa does not exceed 370,000 or 380,000 persons, or slightly above the population of Dublin (361,800).

To insure that this vast territory shall be open to English trade, and available as a home for the surplus millions of our population in future years, England has during the last hundred years made enormous sacrifices. We have expended vast sums of money, and many of our bravest soldiers have given their lives for their country in battle against the Kaffirs, Zulus, and other native tribes, or have fallen victims to the climate. Naturally, and rightly, England, having made the sacrifices necessary to bring the country into a condition of civilisation fit for the occupation of her subjects, now says to other countries: 'We are the paramount power in South Africa, and intend to remain so. You are most welcome to

come and settle or trade, but you must not interfere politically with this part of the country.'

But this position of paramount power entails certain great and evident responsibilities.

There are in the Transvaal many subjects of the United States, France, Germany, Italy, Austria, and other countries; they have invested vast sums of money in gold mining, and they are suffering equally with the English from the intolerable misgovernment of the Transvaal. We say to them, 'You shall not appeal to your own governments for redress of your grievances, this is our business; any foreign country who wishes to interfere in our sphere of influence in South Africa must first fight and conquer England.' But if England maintains this attitude (and no British Government which proposed to abandon our paramount position in South Africa could remain in office a week), then the responsibility of insuring decent government in the Transvaal becomes an absolute duty for England.

We say plainly to the Great Powers of the world, 'Hands off; however much your subjects in the Transvaal are robbed or misgoverned, if their hard-won profits are handed over wholesale to monopolists, if their lives are not safe, and their taxation is excessive, you shall not interfere; it is our business.' Very well, then; let us attend to our business, and see that justice is done, and that decent government prevails wherever the responsibility of England extends.

The eyes of all the world are on us to see whether we are equal to our responsibilities. The eyes of all the inhabitants of our other colonies are on us also. They are all asking themselves the question, Is it worth while being a British citizen? Is England capable, and is England determined, to secure justice for her subject wherever it is her duty to do so?

We have been very patient. If the United States, if France, Germany, or Russia, had been in our position would they have as patiently allowed their subjects to be oppressed? It is well known that the Transvaal disposes every year of an

enormous sum of secret service money. It has often been asserted, and is widely believed, that this money is spent in stirring up animosity against England, not only in South Africa, but anywhere in the world where a journalist or a politician can be bribed to try to injure England. Would any of these countries have allowed even the suspicion of such a thing to continue without investigating it thoroughly, and taking the sternest steps to render it impossible in future if it were proved to be true?

The unfortunate thing is, that by persons in the condition of civilisation and mental development of the Boers, our patience and forbearance are absolutely misunderstood.

Mr. Gladstone no doubt honestly believed that when, after our defeats at Laing's Nek, Ingogo, and Majuba Hill, we gave in, and yielded to the demands of the Boers to restore the government of the Transvaal to them, they would appreciate our magnanimity, and that their gratitude and love for us would be a sufficient reward and recompense for the intense humiliation inflicted on the English-speaking populations throughout the world. We gave them Home Rule on the condition that our own subjects and the Boers were to be treated exactly alike, and that the government was to be carried on in accordance with civilised ideas. But our magnanimity they regarded as cowardice, the gratitude we expected was never forthcoming, and from that moment to this they have occupied themselves in ingeniously contriving ever more and more devices by which, without appearing openly to violate the Convention or give us a decent pretext for interference, they could absolutely defeat the intention of the Convention that equal treatment and equal justice should be the right of the English as well as the Boer inhabitants of the Transvaal.

They have never made the slightest attempt to observe the spirit of the Convention; they have shown us openly that they despise us as a poor mean-spirited race, and that they consider the way to treat us is to take their own way, regardless of our wishes or ideas, or of those of the majority of

their own population, and only to give way when they are obliged.

When we had conquered the Zulus who were threatening to sweep the Boers out of existence, they rushed a portion of Zulu territory called 'the New Republic' territory, to which they had no possible right. We protested, but eventually gave way, thereby, as many people think, sacrificing the rights of the native population of those districts in a most unjustifiable manner. The expedition under Sir Charles Warren, which cost the country 725,000*l.*, was necessitated by Boer disregard of the Convention, while the closing of the drifts was an attempt to disregard the rights of the Uitlanders so flagrant and so iniquitous that the British Government was absolutely forced to interfere, and brought us to the very verge of war with the Transvaal.

Events move so quickly that what happened may have escaped the memory of some of my readers, so I will briefly recall the facts. The charges of the Netherlands Railway Company were so exorbitant, and their system of management so oppressive, that the inhabitants of Johannesburg determined to get some of their supplies from Cape Colony by ox-wagon. The Boer retaliated by 'closing the drifts,' that is to say, by ordering their armed custom-house officers at the 'drifts' or fords to prevent any ox-wagons crossing the river, and so force the Uitlanders to submit to the exactions of the railway company. England interfered and President Kruger had to give way; the railway charges, however, as will be seen in the following papers, are still flagrantly extortionate. England in granting the Convention intended to give Home Rule, or self-government, to all inhabitants of the Transvaal, English, Dutch, or foreign, but the laws insuring self-government have been gradually altered, so that self-government exists no longer; at the time of the Convention all owners of land had a right to a vote, and no difficulties were placed in the way of the acquirement of a vote by any inhabitant who came up to some simple conditions of qualification; but by successive alterations in the laws these rights have been

gradually filched away from the majority of the population, until now all rights of government are monopolised by a small group of Dutchmen, and the self-government which England intended to give has become absolutely illusory and non-existent.

The result of all this is that our position as paramount power in South Africa is in the eyes of the inhabitants, both white and black, gradually being undermined. To all appearance the Boers are the strong and the English the weak; if wrong and injustice flourish under the ægis of England's suzerainty, the natural impression made on an uneducated mind is, either that England approves of injustice or that England is powerless to remedy it. No doubt we can assert ourselves if we wish, but matters are not getting better, but worse; already we are spending half a million a year on our military forces in South Africa more than we need do, if the Transvaal were not a centre of perpetual discontent on the part of the English population, and a centre of intrigue against England by Boer politicians.

President Kruger and the extremely astute group of politicians who surround him have acted very cleverly. They have proceeded so gradually that it has been very difficult to fix the moment when England ought to interfere. But they have now gone too far; our English fellow-countrymen in the Transvaal and the subjects of many foreign powers have formally appealed to England, and England has now deliberately to decide whether she is justified in continuing, as the paramount and suzerain power, to protect the Boers from all outside interference, and at the same time to allow the present state of injustice and oppression to continue.

The method of reform proposed is to give the inhabitants of the Transvaal a sufficient share in the government to enable them to get their own grievances redressed. The franchise is only a means to an end; unless it gives the Uitlanders sufficient political power to get their grievances redressed it is a sham, and worse than nothing.

If a 40-foot ladder is necessary to enable you to reach a certain platform, what is the use of offering you one of 30

feet? What is the use of offering to split the difference and give you a 35-foot one, or even one of 38 or 39 feet, if 40 feet is the least that will enable you to reach the platform? Forty feet becomes the irreducible minimum, and anything less than that is a sham and a mockery.

The irreducible minimum in the franchise question is such a franchise as will enable the Uitlanders to get sufficient political power to insist on their grievances being redressed, and on having a decent and honest Government. Any franchise which will not give them this amount of political power is a snare and a delusion.

When I was in the Transvaal everyone hoped that President Kruger and the Boers would see the necessity for some change, and would make the reforms themselves without any necessity for the interference of England. But nearly two years have passed; any pretended reforms have proved illusory, and matters have gone from bad to worse.

The Uitlander population has appealed to England as the suzerain power. Sir Alfred Milner was sent out as one of our most able and fair-minded public servants to investigate matters calmly and impartially, and his conclusions are that it is impossible that the present state of affairs can be allowed to continue. The injustice and misgovernment of the Boers may now be considered to be proved, and it is impossible for England any longer to look on quietly. In the eyes of the world the responsibility is England's, and England must be equal to the occasion.

# THE REAL GRIEVANCES

OF THE

# UITLANDERS

WHEN I made up my mind to pay a short visit to South Africa, I had not the slightest intention of writing on the subject of the Transvaal, or on any African subject whatever; but before I started several of my friends asked me to try and get information as to the relations between the Boer Government and the gold industry; what they said in effect was this:—

> We are puzzled by the conflicting accounts we hear: we are told on the one hand that the troubles which have afflicted the gold industry in the Transvaal are not in any way due to the Government. The people interested have brought all these troubles on themselves by mismanagement and over-capitalisation; their grievances are imaginary or sentimental, and they are trying to put the blame of their own mistakes, or worse, on to the Government. On the other hand, we are told that if the Transvaal had been governed decently and in accordance with the most commonplace requirements of modern civilisation, many mines would be paying which it is now impossible to work; the population of the Transvaal would be double what it is, and prosperity would reign where distress and poverty are prevalent—in fact, that the present Government in the Transvaal is a disgrace to civilisation. We want to know the real facts of the case. Do try and discover the truth.

During a stay of some weeks at Johannesburg I had every opportunity of studying the facts. All information was placed at my disposal, both sides of the question were laid before me, and I have formed definite opinions on the subject.

Let us now try to examine how far the grievances are imaginary and sentimental, or real and practical.

## 1. Political Rights.

We all know how the chapter on Snakes in Ireland began and ended with the words, 'There are no snakes in Ireland.' Well, the catalogue of the political rights of all the inhabitants of the Transvaal, except a small section of them, begins and ends with the words, 'They have no political rights.' Political power is entirely in the hands of a small clique, the franchise being confined almost entirely to the Dutch farmers, living to a great extent in remote districts, a large proportion of whom can neither read nor write. Now many different ideas have prevailed in modern times as to who shall be the holders of political power. In most cases, especially in modern republics, it is considered that all householders or ratepayers of full age, who have incurred no personal disability, shall have a right to vote, and that the course of government shall be guided by the views of the majority.

But in the Transvaal the vast majority have no votes; the adult male white population numbers over 60,000, and of these only about 22,000 have votes. It is evident that the word 'republic' is entirely a misnomer. The Transvaal is no more a republic in the true sense of the word than are the empires of Russia and Germany, and a constitutional monarchy like that of England has very much more of the character of a true republic than the constitution of the Transvaal. It is in effect an oligarchy: all power is in the hands of a privileged few, who act as if they had a divine right to dispose of the fortunes and properties of the majority exactly as they think fit.

Power, we read in history, has often been in the hands of a select few, and various qualifications have been thought to justify the monopoly of it.

At one time it was the possession of land, but this is not the case here. On the basis of land value belonging to private individuals, more than half belongs to the Uitlanders.

Those who have no votes hold nearly all the mines, houses, mercantile businesses, freeholds in town, &c. Probably of the wealth of the country not nearly one-tenth is possessed by the holders of political power. Some people would say the best educated should rule. Apply this test.

The Boer farmers, who have the majority of the votes, are notoriously ill-educated; not only are many of them unable to read and write, but they live in remote districts, and take

no interest in any but local affairs. On the Rand there are many of the most intelligent citizens the world can produce, belonging to many nations—Americans, Germans, French and Austrians, as well as English. Engineers and chemists, bankers, financiers, men engaged in large mercantile businesses—all these are considered unfit to take any share in public business in the Transvaal. You have accordingly an extremely curious and abnormal state of things. You have the wealth, the education, the energy, the knowledge of the world, the large majority in numbers of the white population on one side, and a small minority, possessing neither education nor wealth nor knowledge of affairs on the other, who claim a divine right to govern the majority, and to dispose of their property as they please.

And this minority is not even united. It is well known that many of them disapprove entirely of the present Government. In fact, it is believed that, deducting the army of officials whose daily bread depends on the favour of the Government, and who form an enormous electioneering force, there would be a clear majority against the Government. At any rate, it is evident that the country is governed by a fraction, large or small, of a minority. Truly a state of unstable equilibrium, a pyramid balanced on its apex! Still, it may be objected, 'it is possible that though there may seem to be great injustice in the way the Government is chosen, yet their laws and their administration are so good that there would be nothing gained by a change.'

I admit at once that if the Boer Government could show that, as compared with the average of modern Governments, the inhabitants of the country would have nothing to gain by a change; that the laws were wise and well administered, the taxation light, and the conditions under which the industries of the country were carried on as favourable as in the majority of civilised countries; then I should agree that the desire for equal political rights was, though a natural wish, yet mainly a sentimental one.

But that brings us to the question: Are the conditions of life worse under Boer rule than they are elsewhere, and than they should be?

To answer this we must consider the complaints of the Uitlanders seriatim.

1. *Taxation.*—The grievance with regard to taxation is

that the Government is alleged to exact from the people an annual sum far in excess of what would be necessary to carry on the administration of the country according to the most civilised ideas; in fact, that while in 1896 the sum of 3,584,235*l.* 16*s.* 7*d.* was spent by the Government, a sum of 1,500,000*l.* ought to have sufficed, or at any rate that 2,000,000*l.* ought to have been far more than sufficient. If that is correct, then, a sum largely exceeding a million and a half sterling was raised and spent which ought to have remained in the pockets of the people. Let us see what is spent by the three other States of South Africa, which are certainly not worse governed than the Transvaal. To compare this expenditure we must of course deduct working expenditure on railways. The railways in Natal and Cape Colony belong to the Government, are worked by them, and all the working expenditure and maintenance of the railways appears in their budget. The Transvaal Government does not own or work the railways, and therefore no working or maintenance expenses are included in their accounts. We must also, to make a fair comparison, exclude annual interest on debt; a large portion of the debt of Natal and the Cape Colony having been raised for the purpose of making railways and other productive works, the interest on which is paid for out of the profits. The expenditure therefore given below includes the whole yearly expenditure of these four States, working expenses and maintenances of State railways, and interest on national debt being excluded in each case.

When one sees the average amount per annum on which these States have managed to exist, and the appalling rate at which the Transvaal expenditure has increased, the taxpayers have certainly a right to some explanation.

The comparison stands thus:—

| | Area in sq. miles | White population | Coloured population | Expenditure 1896 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cape Colony . . | 276,947 | 382,998 | 1,323,042 | £2,627,346 4 11[1] |
| Natal . . . . | 20,461 | 46,788 | 524,832 | 562,015 0 7[2] |
| Orange Free State | 49,950 | 77,717 | 129,787 | 430,787 8 3[3] |
| Transvaal . . . | 113,642 | 245,397 | 550,000 | 3,584,235 16 7[4] |

[1] From the *Cape Statistical Register*, p. 75.

[2] From the *Natal Statistical Year Book*, pp. D3 and D5.

[3] Figures kindly supplied by Sir William Dunn, Bart., M.P.

[4] From the English edition of the *Report of the Industrial Commission* issued by the Witwatersrand Chamber of Mines, Johannesburg, p. 571.

That is to say, that these three States, with an area of 347,358 square miles and a population of 2,485,164, are spending between them a yearly sum of 3,620,098*l.*, while the Transvaal alone in 1896 has spent 3,584,235*l.* 16*s.* 7*d.*, although it has only an area of 113,642 square miles and a population of 795,397.

The increase in the expenditure of the Transvaal has been as follows:—

| Year | Expenditure | Fixed salaries |
|---|---|---|
| 1885–6 | £ 162,455 0 5 | £ 64,261 12 0 |
| 1890 | 1,509,730 16 0 | 324,520 8 10 |
| 1891 | 1,327,838 5 11 | 332,888 13 9 |
| 1892 | 1,200,163 15 2 | 323,608 0 0 |
| 1893 | 1,247,982 9 6 | 361,275 6 11 |
| 1894 | 1,586,690 14 2 | 419,775 13 10 |
| 1895 | 1,799,742 12 4 | 570,047 12 7 |
| 1896 | 3,584,235 16 7 | 813,029 7 5 |

2. *Dynamite.*—The grievance with regard to dynamite is perhaps of a more irritating and exasperating character than that of taxation; for while it is extremely annoying to have demanded from you double the amount necessary for the good government of the State, yet the money is theoretically, at any rate, raised for the purpose of administration and for the good of the inhabitants of the country; but in the case of the dynamite monopoly, with the exception of 5*s.* per case, and a small share of profit, which is supposed to be received by the Government, the whole of the money forcibly extracted from the gold industry goes into the pockets of private individuals for the most part not even residing in the Transvaal, while such portion of the plunder as goes into the pockets of persons residing in the Transvaal goes into their private purse for their private advantage, and in no case into the coffers of the State.

So many attempts have been made to draw red herrings across the scent of this dynamite monopoly, that I had better quote verbatim from the Report of the Commission:—

> It has, we consider, been clearly proved that the price paid by the mines for explosives of all kinds is unreasonably high.[1] . . .
>
> That the principal explosives used here (blasting gelatine and, to a small extent, dynamite) can be purchased in Europe, and delivered here at a price far below the present cost to the mines, has been proved to us

[1] *Report of Industrial Commission* before cited, p. 451.

by the evidence of many witnesses competent to speak on the subject; and when we bear in mind that the excess charge of 40*s.* to 45*s.* per case does not benefit the State, but serves to enrich individuals for the most part resident in Europe, the injustice of such a tax on the staple industry becomes more apparent and demands immediate removal.

It has been proved that the South African Republic is one of the largest, if not the largest consumer of explosives in the world, and, according to the rule of commerce in such cases, it is reasonable to suppose that the most advantageous terms would be secured for so large a consumer. This, no doubt, would be the case were it not for the monopoly now in the hands of the South African Explosives Company, whereby they and their friends make enormous profits at the expense of the mining industry. These profits have been estimated by the Volksraad Dynamite Commission at no less than 580,000*l.* for the years 1897 and 1898, being 2*l.* per case on 290,000 cases, the number which it is estimated would have to be imported to meet the demand for those years. . . .

This explosive, whether costing 23*s.* 6*d.* or 29*s.* 6*d.* in Hamburg, is supplied to the mines at 85*s.* per case, showing a profit of 47*s.* 6*d.* in one case, and 41*s.* 6*d.* in the other, of which this Government receives 5*s.* per case. That this is a reasonable estimate is supported by the Report of the Volksraad Dynamite Commission, who state that the Company makes a profit of 2*l.* per case on imported dynamite, and further by the evidence of a former agent of Nobel's Dynamite Trust, whose statement was to the effect that he made an offer on behalf of Nobel's to deliver dynamite ex magazine on the Rand at 40*s.* per case of 50 pounds, excluding duty, and this at a time when it had to be brought a considerable distance by ox-wagons.[1]

In the case of blasting gelatine, which is now more largely used than No. 1 dynamite, the margin of profit made by the Company at the expense of the mines is far greater. . . .

The mining industry has thus to bear a burden which does not enrich the State or bring any benefit in return, and this fact must always prove a source of irritation and annoyance to those who, while willing to contribute to just taxation for the general good, cannot acquiesce in an impost of the nature complained of. . . .

Another point that has been brought to the notice of your Commission is the prejudicial effect exercised by this monopoly in practically excluding from the country all new inventions in connection with explosives, and, in view of the numerous dynamite accidents that have taken place from time to time, it is to be regretted that it is not possible to make satisfactory trials of other and less dangerous explosives for the working of mines.[2] . . .

The reader must remember that this Commission was appointed by the Boer Government, and that the report was signed unanimously by all the members of it, including such prominent members of the executive as General Joubert and Mr. Schalk Burger, chairman, Mr. Schmitz Dumont, acting

[1] *Report of Industrial Commission* before cited, p. 452. [2] *Ibid.* p. 453.

State mining engineer, and Mr. J. F. de Beer, first special judicial commissioner.

If it is not a solid grievance to be compelled to pay a monopoly price of 85*s*. to Messrs. Nobel for exactly the same thing that Messrs. Nobel offered to supply in any quantity to any mine at 40*s*. when no monopoly existed, then I do not know what a grievance is; and we must always remember that out of this 85*s*. only 5*s*. goes in reduction of taxation, and all the rest of the profit to private individuals.

3. *Railway rates and transit duties.*—We come now to the question of railway rates, which are to my mind of supreme importance to the well-being and progress of the Transvaal.

There is no difficulty at all in producing prosperity in the gold industry. In two years the population of Johannesburg might be doubled, and an enormous addition made to the production of gold. It is simply a question of reducing expenses. A few very rich mines can pay well at present, but there are many more mines which could produce at a profit if the expenses were reduced a few shillings a ton. Under present conditions the gold produced from a ton of low grade ore does not pay the working expenses, but, in many cases, it is within a shilling or two of doing so, and the moment the working expenses were reduced below the value of the gold produced the mines would start working. The object, therefore, of a Government which had the prosperity of its subjects really at heart should be to do its utmost to reduce the expense of producing gold.

The first thing to be done is to reduce the expense of living on the Rand, and to get out of the heads of people that Johannesburg is necessarily a dear place to live in. There is no reason why it should be.

The climate is excellent, no extremes of heat or cold, an altitude of 5,700 feet, sunshine nearly every day of the year, cool nights, and a dry porous soil. There are places in the world where the climate is so dangerous to health that no one would live there if he were not exceptionally well paid; there are mines so cut off from communication with the world that the mere fact of the isolation is a hardship. I have visited mines years ago in California where there were no roads, everything came on the back of mules; one store only, belonging to the proprietor, where everything had to

be bought at the very highest price; no bicycles, no tennis, no reading-rooms, no theatres, races, or amusements in any form whatever; where it was said that the only thing that flourished was the cemetery, and the chances of being sent suddenly out of the world by a revolver or a bowie-knife had to be taken seriously into consideration. Compare this with Johannesburg, where there are amusements for all tastes, good natural roads for bicycles, any number of tennis courts, churches, chapels, free reading-rooms, excellent daily papers, polo, golf, theatres, music-halls, races—in fact, satisfaction for tastes of all kinds. Except for the fact of being away from home, there is no hardship in living there, no special risks to health, or special discomforts for which extraordinary remuneration is required. Yet things are so dear that an absolutely artificial scale of expenditure and prices is maintained.

That is what a wise Government would try to alter, with a view of getting working expenses down to such a point as would allow the moderately rich mines to be worked at some profit.

The first thing to attack is the railway and transit dues. There are five ports competing to supply Johannesburg—Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, Durban, and Delagoa Bay—and three distinct systems of railways.

The distance from Cape Town to Johannesburg is 1014 miles.

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ,, | ,, | Port Elizabeth | ,, | ,, | 715 | ,, |
| ,, | ,, | East London | ,, | ,, | 666 | ,, |
| ,, | ,, | Durban | ,, | ,, | 483 | ,, |
| ,, | ,, | Delagoa Bay | ,, | ,, | 396 | ,, |

The railway to Delagoa Bay is evidently the key to the situation, and ought to be utilised for the purpose of bringing down the rates on all the South African railways. But it has been used for exactly the opposite purpose. The Netherlands Railway Company, which holds all the railways in the Transvaal, has used its command of the situation *not* to get cheap carriage of goods to Johannesburg, but, on the contrary, to make the carriage of goods to Johannesburg as dear as possible. In fact, it has almost forced the other S.A. railways to keep up their high tariffs. It is currently asserted that when the Cape Government wished to reduce a rate the Netherlands Company told them that they could reduce if

they liked, but that the amount taken off would be instantly added to the Netherlands railway charge, so that the through rate would remain the same. It may be asked how the Transvaal Government can prevent this. The Government have the right under their concession to buy up the railway at twenty times the average dividend of the last three years. The capital is only 1,666,666*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.*; in addition there are loans of just over 6,000,000*l.* guaranteed by Government at rates of interest of 4 per cent., 5 per cent., and 5–8 per cent. Of course, these loans being perfectly well secured, and the Government having already the responsibility of them, nothing but advantage to the State could ensue from taking them over altogether, as they could borrow the money at a much lower rate of interest, and there would be only the capital of 1,666,666*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* to be dealt with. As the profit in 1896 is said to be well over a million and a quarter, and the dividends have only been moderate for the last three years, expropriation would be a splendid financial operation for the Transvaal, even allowing for a very considerable reduction in rates: a reduction which would bring down the rates to Johannesburg on all the railways in South Africa, and of course the reduction on the outside railways, would be of enormous benefit to the inhabitants, without costing the Transvaal revenue a farthing. It is hardly conceivable that the Government should refuse to carry out this expropriation, unless they wish to see the gold industry suffer and languish on account of excessive railway charges, but they obstinately refuse to carry it out.

The geographical advantage of the position of South Africa is thus thrown away. Look at the map of the world, and you will see that South Africa is exceptionally well situated to obtain any of the necessaries of life that she may require at the cheapest possible rate. Cape Town is in the track of great lines of steamers bringing all sorts of produce from Australasia, corn and beef and mutton, which are sold at extremely low prices in England, 6,000 miles farther away. Rice from the East, tea, coffee, wheat from India, oils and hemp, all raw materials, can be obtained with the greatest ease and at extremely moderate cost. South Africa herself produces within her own boundaries an enormous number of consumable articles. She has vast herds of sheep and goats, immense numbers of cattle, even after the rinderpest; fruit

in enormous quantities—bananas, oranges, pineapples; tea, coffee, and sugar. When you come to manufactured articles, England and Germany are probably the cheapest centres of export. There are magnificent lines of steamers from England; and there is the German East African Company, with a regular service and a Government subsidy, starting from Hamburg, calling at Naples, and passing through the Suez Canal, thus bringing any German, Mediterranean, or Egyptian supplies that may be wanted.

South Africa has every opportunity of buying in the cheapest markets of the world, and there are many, very many steamers anxious to carry goods to South Africa at very moderate freights. They are brought cheaply to any of her five competing ports—and then? Ah! then all the conditions are changed. Then governments and railways and officials seem to use their best energies to destroy all the natural advantages of South Africa as a buyer, and to compete as to which can do most to run up the cost of all articles imported. If this is their object, they may certainly be congratulated on the success they have achieved.

Look at the sworn evidence of Mr. G. Albu before the Industrial Commission: [1]

*Question.* What did you mean just now when you said that you cannot decrease wages while you are still paying high railway rates?

*Answer.* For instance, during the drought we imported mealies (Indian corn) from America. They cost us, landed in Durban, 9*s.*,[2] and delivered on the mines 22*s.* 6*d.* How can the mining industry, which requires 50,000 sacks per month, pay, if they have to pay on a commodity of that kind more than 100 per cent. for railway transit for 350 miles after these mealies have come thousands of miles from America?

*Evidence of Mr. W. L. Hamilton, American Mining Engineer.*[3]

We imported two crushers from Chicago. The rate from Chicago to New York, which is considered very high in America, was 37*l.* 5*s.* 10*d.* for a distance of 1,000 miles, and from Vereeniging here it was 39*l.* 6*s.*—more for 50 miles than it cost for 1,000. (Vereeniging to Johannesburg is the Netherlands Railway portion of the route from the Southern ports to Johannesburg. There is no transhipment; the trucks merely run straight over this line.)

These are actual sums paid by mines at Johannesburg for consignments from East London, a distance of 666 miles:—

[1] From the edition of the *Industrial Commission Report* cited before, p. 33.
[2] Per bag of 200 lbs.
[3] Report before cited, p. 84.

| Description | Home cost | Sea freight | Railage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cast-iron base plates . | £114 | £ 53 | £201 |
| „ „ „ . | 249 | 114 | 433 |
| Portland cement . . | 82 | 83 | 385 |

*Mr. FitzPatrick's Evidence.*[1]

I will give you a few examples of importation from the Baltic and America. I will give you the prime cost and the railage from Delagoa Bay, showing the comparison between the cost and the railage, which, you will see, supports my contentions as to the excessive rates. We will take pitch-pine. The prime cost of a consignment was 1,722*l.* The railage amounted to 7,234*l.* Oregon pine, prime cost 2,988*l.*, railage from Delagoa Bay 14,500*l.* Baltic deals cost 2,679*l.*, railage 4,170*l.* Galvanised iron cost 253*l.*, railage 210*l.* I will give you some instances where the difference is smaller. Sheet lead 61*l.* 10*s.*, railage 40*l.* Cotton waste, prime cost 92*l.*, railage 32*l.* 15*s.* Candles (very largely used on the mines) 1,337*l.*, railage 313*l.* There are others, but I will hand in the statement to the Commission, if they like. Those figures are American. There is another statement, showing the cost of Australian materials. On the first cost of 1,855*l.* the railage from Durban was 4,100*l.* . . .

Listen to this, railway directors and railway managers who are trying painfully to make dividends for shareholders in Europe and America out of rates amounting only to a penny, or a fraction of a penny, per mile!

The rate charged on the Netherlands Railway from Vereeniging to Johannesburg is 7½*d.* per ton per mile. This is on rough goods which pass over the Netherlands Railway, travelling over the Cape and Orange Free State railways, and their fifty-two miles is part of an uninterrupted run of from 600 to 1,000 miles, according to the port they start from. There is no transhipment, no change of gauge, and the Netherlands Railway portion is the easiest in the way of gradients, curves, &c.

The average capital cost per mile on the respective railways stands thus:—

| | | £ | *s.* | *d.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1895 | Cape . . . . | 9,056 | 9 | 1 |
| „ | Natal . . . . | 15,254 | 17 | 9 |
| „ | Netherlands . . . | 15,359 | 6 | 10 |
| 1897 | Orange Free State . . | 7,479 | 4 | 6 |

In addition to the enormous railway rates and high dock dues, there is a very heavy transit duty, often 3 per cent. *ad*

[1] Report before cited, p. 54.

*valorem*, charged by the Natal and Cape Governments solely for the privilege of passing goods through their territory, although these railways are the property of the States which realise enormous sums annually out of the profits they earn; yet the Government of the Transvaal, knowing perfectly well the extent to which its only real industry is being hampered and bled to death by these excessive charges, calmly declines to carry out its option of purchasing the railway, which would be a great financial benefit to the State, and is the only way in which the inhabitants of the State can be protected against these forced contributions.

We now come to a different class of grievances specially affecting the gold industry, in which there is little or nothing to complain of in the laws themselves. It is the administration of the laws that causes injury and loss.

4. *Liquor laws and drunkenness of natives.*—The law is good, viz. that no liquor shall be sold to natives without a written authorisation from the employer, but, as the police do not enforce the law, it is of small effect to prevent drunkenness.

The following quotations are from letters laid before the Commission: [1]—

Worcester Exploration and Gold Mining Co.,
Johannesburg, March 16th, 1897.

Dear Sir,—I beg to hand you copy of a letter addressed to Commandant Van Dam, but nothing has been done to check the illicit liquor traffic. In fact, it is more rampant than ever, and boys in squads can be seen openly carrying and drinking liquor *ad lib.*

On the 8th inst. upwards of three hundred of our natives were drunk and incapable. . . .

I remain, yours truly,
(*Signed*) JOHN L. DE ROOS,
Manager.

The Secretary,
Chamber of Mines, Johannesburg.

Mr. Whitburn, manager of the Henry Nourse Gold Mining Company, writes on the 28th of April 1897: [2]—

Yesterday afternoon there was a fight between our natives and those of the Nourse Deep, Limited. They have smashed nearly all the windows in the places both here and at the Nourse Deep, and knocked up things generally. . . . It all started through their being drunk, and of course the police were not to be found.

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[1] Report already cited, p. 474. [2] *Ibid.* p. 473.

Mr. Weighton, secretary to the Nigel Company, writes to the Landrost in April 1897 : [1]—

I am desired by my Board of Directors to again bring to your notice the fact that although the Liquor Law in the Transvaal provides that no drink shall be supplied to natives, yet at this company's property drunkenness amongst these people is as rife as ever.

The gravest feature of this matter is that this pernicious trade is carried on right under the noses of the police and local authorities, and although information has been given and witnesses sent to prove violation of the law, yet in no case whatever has conviction followed.

The mines on the Rand are not concentrated in one place, but extend in a long line over forty miles of reef. There are no buildings as a rule, except the buildings belonging to the companies, and two or three small houses calling themselves stores, hotels, &c. The velt is a bare treeless expanse, and to say that, when 300 natives are drunk at one mine at the same time, it is impossible for the police to ascertain where they obtained the liquor is an insult to common-sense.

Closely connected with the liquor traffic is the question of the stealing of gold amalgam.[2] It is currently believed that the same persons who provide the capital to work the illicit liquor traffic also provide the capital to bribe employés of the companies to steal amalgam, and that the police are so entirely in their power that it is impossible to obtain convictions. The law is good; it is a punishable offence to be in possession of native gold or amalgam, unless you hold a licence to buy it. But what is the use of a law if the police are on the side of the offenders ?

Now this crime of amalgam buying is one of the most abominable in the world, and ought to be the most severely dealt with. The amalgam buyer is not moved by any sudden temptation or want of money. On the contrary, he requires a large capital, and sets himself deliberately to work to corrupt men's honesty. Many and many a man who would otherwise have led an honest, self-respecting life has yielded to his tempting and has become a thief—a thief of the basest description, for, being placed by his employers in a

[1] Report already cited, p. 475.

[2] The ore, when reduced to fine powder by the stamps, is carried by water over metal plates covered with quicksilver, which catches and holds the gold. This mixture of quicksilver and gold is called amalgam. It is soft and easily removed by hand from the plates, and, being composed of about $\frac{1}{3}$ gold and $\frac{2}{3}$ quicksilver, is of course very valuable.

position of trust and responsibility, he takes advantage of it to steal their gold.

A friend of mine, who succeeded lately to a position of trust in a mine, told me that within a few days of his appointment he had an intimation that gold or amalgam to any extent would be purchased. Johannesburg is not a large place, and if the Government were really determined to have an honest police force, and would put their backs into it, it would be possible in a short time to make the place so hot for illicit liquor dealers and amalgam buyers that the businesses would not pay, and they would be either in prison or would migrate to some other place.

There are other grievances, such as the pass law for natives, which I might go into if space allowed; but I think that I have said enough already to show that the grievances complained of are real solid injuries inflicted on the most industrious, intelligent portion of the population, and that they are not sentimental or imaginary, but are capable of being expressed in the most prosaic pounds, shillings, and pence.

With regard to the allegation that the misfortunes of the mining industry are due to mismanagement and over-capitalisation, and that if they were properly managed low grade mines could pay at present, I do not believe it to be true. In the case of some mines there has been no doubt mismanagement and worse in the past, and there may be still, for anything I know; but as far as the bulk of the mines is concerned, and certainly in those controlled by the more important groups of capitalists, I am certain that immense efforts have been made lately with conspicuous success to reduce expenses and to improve the mechanical and chemical processes of extracting the gold. The engineers and managers who have the control of the class of mines I refer to are extremely able and extremely hard-working. The machinery is of the very highest class (I was much pleased at seeing that some of the very best and most successful had been made by my own constituents),[1] and every effort is being made to make the mines pay. The action of the Government is, however, most discouraging. A manager who had been showing me with just pride an improvement he was making, by which he expected to save 3*d.* a ton, remarked: 'But it is very hard

[1] By Messrs. Tangye & Co., of Smethwick and Birmingham.

that we should have to run round and wear ourselves out, to save 3*d.* a ton, while the Government is throwing away our money by shillings a ton.'

Immense strides have been made lately in the economy of working, especially in the installations of the deep level mines: the advantage of having the experience of the older mines as a guide what to do and what to avoid has been made the most of, and for any further substantial economies the help of the Government is necessary.

I say without any hesitation that it is to unnecessary expense caused by the action of the Government, and not to unnecessary expense caused by mismanagement, that the failure of many mines to pay their way is due at the present moment.

By the standard of ideas of any modern republic, or any civilised country, the grievances are undeniable. One of the first principles of modern government is that no more taxes ought to be raised than the administration of the country requires; that the taxpayers have a right to representation, and that the Governments exist for the benefit of the governed, and not for the benefit of the governors.

But of course this standard of ideas has not always prevailed: especially in the East: there was the time of the 'strong man armed who keepeth his house'—the idea of 'rights' between the governor and the governed was not then invented. The strong man simply said: 'Here I am; until the stronger man comes I shall do as I please, and dispose of the lives and properties of my weaker neighbours according to my fancy.' President Kruger seems to have been leaning towards this standard of government when he made the remark quoted by Mr. W. H. Campbell at the meeting of the Rand Mines in March 1897, describing how he went on a deputation to President Kruger in 1888: 'One of the petitions happened to contain the words "*we protest*" several times, and the President angrily denied the right to use such words, and pertinently asked, "What sense is there in protesting if you cannot enforce it?" In other words, "there exists no right in this country, except the right of the stronger."'

We come later to a time in history when rights were asserted, but they were the rights of the governor. The king or emperor claimed divine right to rule; he gave out monopolies and concessions as President Kruger does, but there

was this difference: rulers in those days knew nothing of trade and political economy, and did not realise the far-reaching harm they were doing; also they gave these concessions to people in their own country, and presumably to those who had rendered some service either to their king or country. But who, either in history or out of it, ever heard of rulers handing over the fruits of labour exerted in their country to outsiders, to people residing outside their country, who have provided neither labour nor capital to provide these fruits; on the contrary, whose existence has been a hindrance and a nuisance to the industry, and has interfered seriously with providing any fruits at all?

To start a mine on the Rand requires a very large capital. Who provided this capital? The dynamite monopolists? Not a farthing of it. It came partly from persons residing in South Africa and very largely from the savings of persons residing in Europe; savings belonging to a great extent to very poor people, put by sou by sou and sixpence by sixpence by hardworking people in England and France and Germany, who thought that the higher interest they hoped to receive would add materially to their comfort; and their calculations were right as to the mines, only they forgot the Government. Now these people spent their savings in opening out mines, in putting up the finest machinery, in costly experiments of many kinds; they have collected the cleverest engineers and managers, assayers and chemists, from all the mining centres of the world; then, when the gold is won from the earth, what happens? I must quote Mr. Campbell again: 'It meant that all the gold extracted from the Rand was kept in a huge open treasure-chest in the public road, open to all and sundry in South Africa, States and persons, to plunge in their hands and help themselves at will.'

I may say here that I started from England with great sympathy for the agricultural Boers living on their estates in the quiet rural parts of the country. They were represented to us as pious men, good citizens according to their light, as landowners who had originally, some forty or fifty years ago, migrated from the more densely populated parts of the colony, partly to escape British rule, which they disliked, and partly because they wished to live a quiet secluded country life as their fathers had done before them. Now, as an English agriculturist, whose fathers have lived for many generations

in the same house, on the same land, I naturally sympathised, and still sympathise very strongly, with those whose only wish is to be let alone and allowed to live their own life in their own way. But ever since I began to study this question in South Africa I have been asking myself the question, Where does the agricultural Boer come in in all this? How are his material interests benefited, or his religious aspirations gratified, by the misgovernment of his fellow-citizens? The enormous gains of monopolists and concessionnaires do not go into his pocket, are not even spent in his country; and how does he reconcile it with his religious convictions that no serious attempt is made to stop the demoralisation of the Kaffirs by permitting the sale of spirits so vile and poisonous, that drunkenness is not only encouraged, but the health and utility of the labourer seriously impaired?

It is only fair to remember that many of the Boers hold in all honesty and sincerity religious ideas which seem to us extremely peculiar and out of date; it is difficult for an outsider to ascertain exactly what these ideas are, but the following extracts from arguments used in the Transvaal parliament may throw some light on them. On July 21, 1892, the question of taking measures to destroy the locusts came before the First Raad.

Mr. Roos said locusts were a plague, as in the days of King Pharaoh, sent by God, and the country would assuredly be loaded with shame and obloquy if it tried to raise its hand against the mighty hand of the Almighty.

The Chairman related a true story of a man whose farm was always spared by the locusts, until one day he caused some to be killed. His farm was then devastated.

Mr. Stoop conjured the members not to constitute themselves terrestrial gods and oppose the Almighty.

Mr. Lucas Meyer raised a storm by ridiculing the arguments of the former speakers, and comparing the locusts to beasts of prey which they destroyed.

Mr. Labuschagne said the locusts were quite different from beasts of prey. They were a special plague sent by God for their sinfulness.

Again, on August 5, 1895, a memorial was read in the First Raad from Krugersdorp praying that the Raad would pass a law to prohibit the sending up of bombs into the clouds to bring down rain, as it was a defiance of God, and would most likely bring down a visitation from the Almighty. The Memorial Committee reported that they disapproved of such

a thing, but, at the same time, they did not consider they could make a law on the subject.

Mr. A. D. Wolmarans said that he was astonished at this advice, and he expected better from the Commission. If one of their children fired towards the clouds with a revolver, they would thrash him. Why should they permit people to mock at the Almighty in this manner? It was terrible to contemplate. He hoped that the Raad would take steps to prevent such things happening.

Mr. Du Toit (Carolina) said that he had heard that there were companies in Europe which employed numbers of men to do nothing but shoot at the clouds, simply to bring down rain. It was wonderful that men could think of doing such things; they ought to be prohibited here. He did not consider that the Raad would be justified in passing a law on the subject however; but he thought, all the same, that they should express their strongest disapproval of such practices.

The Chairman said if such things were actually done—and he was unaware of it—those who did it ought to be prevented from repeating it.

Is not the agricultural Boer clever enough to see that 22,000 farmers cannot possibly hope to continue indefinitely to misgovern double the number of fellow-citizens, cleverer, richer, and much more energetic than themselves?

And now the reader will ask, what have the Boers themselves to say in answer to all this?

Well, I have had the opportunity of talking to several of them, both official and unofficial, and as far as I could make out they have very little to say indeed. The chief argument used was that they had a right to do as they liked with their own; but the question is, is the gold their own? and have they a right to do as they like with it?

If they had stuck from the first to their rights as private proprietors and refused to sell any land or give any mining rights to any one, they might have been in a strong position. But this is exactly what they have not done.

They were anxious to see the Uitlanders develop the mineral resources of their country,[1] and have, from the Pre-

[1] The accompanying letter will show the attitude taken up by the Transvaal Government in 1883:—

Albemarle Hotel, 1 Albemarle St., W.
December 21st, 1883.

Sir,—I am directed by the President and Deputation of the Transvaal to acknowledge your letter of the 19th of December, inquiring whether the Transvaal Government will view with satisfaction the development of the properties on which concessions have been granted, and whether the companies acquiring

sident downwards, with hardly any exception, been only too anxious to make what they could out of them. They have sold him lands, mining rights, options to buy their farms (President Kruger himself has been receiving very large sums for the option to buy his own land) for the highest prices they could obtain, and not one farthing would they have received from the Uitlander in these ways except for the purpose of mining gold, or on account of the increased value given to the land by the gold-mining industry. Now that the Uitlander has spent tens of millions sterling to enable the gold to be produced, and that the Boer, as an individual, has extracted every farthing he could for his land and his rights, has he still a right to say: 'The gold still belongs to us as a small close borough of voters, to use as we like, and even to hand over at our pleasure to concessionnaires and outsiders'?

This argument hardly seems to hold water.

With regard to railway rates, the only excuse offered me by one Boer official, and another prominent ex-official, was that it cost more to bring the goods in bullock-wagons!

Now this might be a good excuse if the Boer Government were to say: 'If you do not like the charges of the existing railway, make a railway for yourselves, and try if you can carry goods cheaper.'

This is exactly what they do *not* say.

They say: 'You shall not make any other railway. You will use this railway or none, and you will pay any rates they choose to ask you, even up to $7\frac{1}{2}d.$ per ton per mile on the roughest of rough goods.'

In conclusion, I can only repeat that I commenced this inquiry with an unbiassed mind and with no preconceived

concessions can count upon Government protection. In reply I am to state that the President and Deputation cannot refrain from expressing surprise and indignation at your directors thinking such an inquiry necessary, as it is absurd to suppose that the Government of the Transvaal would grant a concession on the Lisbon and Berlyn or any other farm or plot of ground and then refuse to protect the rights conveyed thereby. The Government desire to see the mineral resources of the Transvaal developed to their fullest extent, and will give every assistance incumbent on them to that end.—I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

EWALD ESSELEN,
Secretary.

J. Davies, Esq., Secretary to the Lisbon-Berlyn (Transvaal) Gold Fields (Limited).

opinions. I have not concealed my own opinions, but at the same time I have endeavoured to state the facts clearly and dispassionately, so as to give every one the opportunity of judging for himself how far the grievances of the Uitlanders are sentimental and imaginary, and how far they are real and substantial.

H. M. MEYSEY-THOMPSON.

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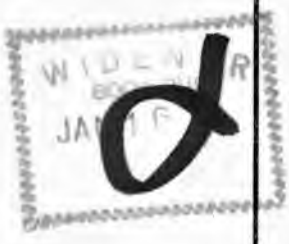
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